

Message Text

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA C)

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TAGS: PEPR, US, MR
SUBJECT: COUNTRY DATA SHEET - MAURITANIA

REF: STATE 78166

1. MAURITANIA

A. ECONOMIC PROFILE

POPULATION - (AS OF JANUARY 1, 1977) 1,420,000. RATE OF GROWTH
WAS ESTIMATED AT 2.1 PERCENT. BIRTH RATE ESTIMAOUZVET 45 TF
50 PER THOUSAND.

INCOME-PER CAPITA GDP IS ESTIMATED AT \$310 FOR 1976, \$262 FOR
1975. MORE RECENT FIGURES NOT AVAILABLE. GROWTH RATE OF GDP
PER CAPITA IS ESTIMATED AT 7 PERCENT.

GROWTH RATE - J
TH RATE FOR GDP FROM 1960-1973 WAS ESTIMATED
AT 5 PERCENT ANNUALLY AND, WHILE MORE RECENT FIGURES ARE NOT
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AVAILABLE, GROWTH IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE DECLINE SOMEWHAT IN
1975 AND 1976 OWING TO DROUGHT CONDITIONS AND THE FALL IN WORLD
MINERAL PRICES.

LITERACY RATE - 12 PERCENT. IN 1975 LESS THAN 17 PERCENT
OF CHILDREN OF PR--46 SCHOOL AGE WERE RECEIVING FORMAL
EDUCATION.

LIFE EXPECTANCY - 38-44 YEARS OF AGE, FOR BOTHSEXES.

PEOPLE PER DOCTOR - 17,550

NUTRITION- NO FIGURES AVAILABLE

B. POLITICAL SITUATION

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: MAURITANIA IS A ONE PARTY STATE WITH A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. THE PRESIDENT, WHO IS BOTH CHIEF OF STATE AND HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, IS ELECTED BY DIRECT UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE FOR A 5-YEAR TERM. PRESIDENT MOKTAR OULD DADDAH HAS BEEN PRESIDENT OF MAURITANIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN 1960 AND WAS REELECTED TO A FOURTH TERM IN AUGUST 1976. LEGISLATIVE POWER IS VESTED IN A UNICAMERAL 77 MEMBER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHOSE MEMBERS ARE ELECTED BY DIRECT UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE FOR 5-YEAR TERMS. THE MAURITANIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY WAS LAWFULLY ESTABLISHED AS THE SOLE POLITICAL PARTY IN DECEMBER 1964. THE PARTY IS GOVERNED BY 40-MEMBER NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU WHICH CONSISTS OF GOVERNMENT MINISTERS, PARTY OFFICIALS FROM EACH REGION AND OTHER PARTY OFFICIALS. PRESIDENT MOKTAR OULD DADDAH IS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PARTY. JUDICIAL AUTHORITY IS CONSTITUTIONALLY INDEPENDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES. POLITICALLY ACTIVE GROUPS WITHIN THE NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTY INCLUDE THE YOUTH, WOMEN'S AND UNION MOVEMENTS.

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PARTICULAR PROBLEMS:

THE RECURRENCE OF EXTREME DROUGHT CONDITIONS IN 1978 HAS SERIOUSLY Affected THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY IN WHICH APPROXIMATELY 85 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION PARTICIPATES. THE COUNTRY HAS NEVER FULLY RECOVERED FROM THE 1972/73 DROUGHT AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN SEVERELY RETARDED. A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF THE NATION'S CAMEL, CATTLE, GOAT AND SHEEP HERDS IS THREATENED WITH EXTINCTION BY THE 1978 DROUGHT. OWING TO THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF INADEQUATE RAINFALL SINCE THE LATE 1960S, RENEWABLE RESOURCES (ARABLE SOILS, FOREST, AND PASTURAGE) HAVE BECOME SERIOUSLY ENDANGERED WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE IRREVERSIBLE DEGRADATION WHICH COULD LEAD TO PERMANENT DESERTIFICATION OF MOST OF THE COUNTRY. AS A RESULT OF THIS SERIOUS SITUATION IN THE RURAL AREAS, THE PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION IN URBAN AREAS IS DRAMATICALLY INCREASING, PLACING A HEAVY BURDEN UPON THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE URBAN SOCIAL SERVICES.

THE MAJOR POLITICAL/MILITARY THREAT TO MAURITANIA IS FROM THE ALGERIAN-BASED POLISARIO MOVEMENT WHICH SEEKS TO

ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT STATE KNOWN AS THE SAHARAN DEMOCRATIC ARAB REPUBLIC (SDAR) IN THE TERRITORY FORMERLY KNOWN AS SPANISH SAHARA AND CURRENTLY REFERRED TO AS WESTERN SAHARA. SINCE EARLY 1976 MAURITANIA AND MOROCCO HAVE ADMINISTERZNHETPIR RESPECTIVE ZONES OF THE WESTERN SAHARA. MAURITANIA CONSIDERS THE INTEGRATION OF THE SOUTHERN THIRD OF THE WESTERN SAHARA TO BE AN ACTION OF NATIONAL REUNIFICATION. MAURITANIA DESCRIBES ITSELF AS A NATION WHICH INCLUDES SAHARANS AND VIEWS THE POLISARIO AS AN INTERNAL THREAT WHICH IS FINANCED CONTROLLED AND ASSISTED BY OUTSIDE FORCES. POLISARIO SPOKESMEN HAVE DISCUSSED EVENTUAL UNION OF THE SDAR WITH MAURITANIA. SINCE MAY 1977 THE LARGE MAJORITY OF POLISARIO MILITARY EFFORTS HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TO ATTACKING IRON ORE OPERATIONS AND THE ZOUERATE/NOUADHIBOU RAIL LINE - AN ATTEMPT TO CRIPPLE IRON ORE EXPORTS WHICH ACCOUNT FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NEARLY 80 PERCENT OF MAURITANIAN FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS. IN ADDITION, A LARGE POLISARIO FORCE ATTACKED NOUAKCHOTT IN JUNE 1976 AND A SMALLER FORCE ATTACKED NOUAKCHOTT IN JULY 1977. ALTHOUGH MAURITANIA HAS EXPANDED ITS MILITARY FROM A FORCE OF 1500 TO AN ARMY OF NEARLY 20,000 BETWEEN LATE 1975 AND EARLY 1978, IT LAS HAD TO CHDCSIC MOROCCAN AND FRENCH MILITARY ASSISTANCE. AS OF MARCH 1978, OVER 8000 MOROCCAN TROOPS ARE STATIONED IN NORTHERN MAURITANIA, PRINCIPALLY ALONG THE NOUADHIBOU/ZOUERATE RAIL LINE AND 100 FRENCH MILITARY ADVISORS ASSIST THUMAURITANIAN ARMY IN TRAINING AND ORGFIZATION. FRENCH AIR FORCE JAGUAR AND RECONNAISANCE AIRCRAFT BASED IN DAKAR, SENEGAL, PERFORM AERIAL RECONNAISANCE OVERMURITANIA AND ARE AVAILABLE TO ASSIST IN PROVIDING AIR SUPPORT AGAINST ATTACKING POLISARIO UNITS. THE FRENCH ADMIT TO DIRECT MILITARY ENGAGEMENT OF JAGUARS ON TWO OCCASIONS IN DECEMBER 1977. MAURITANIANS FREELY AND PUBLICLY ADMIT THAT WITHOUT THIS FRENCH AND MOROCCAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE THEY COULD NOT DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST THE WELL-ARMED POLISARIO UNITS.

C. HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS:

THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO AFFIRMATIVE SUPPORT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ITS CITIZENS. ITS CONSTITUTION REFLECTS BOTH THE FRENCH DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN, AND THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. MAURITANIAN LAW PROVIDES FOR THE RESPECT OF THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON. TORTURE, CRUEL AND INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT AND ARBITRARY ARREST ARE PROHIBITED BY LAW, ALTHOUGH SOME INDIVIDULS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED OR DETAINED IN THE PAST FOR PARTICIPATING IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN CONTRAVENTION OF THE MAURITANIAN CONSTITUTION WHICH RECOGNIZES ONLY ONE POLITICAL PARTY, THERE ARE NO SUCH DETAINEES AT THIS TIME. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORTED IN ITS 1975/1976 REPORT THAT 30 PERSONS PREVIOUSLY DETAINED FOR SUCH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ILLEGAL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES BENEFITED FROM A GENERAL AMNESTY DECLARED IN SEPTEMBER 1975. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY ARE PROTECTED IN MAURITANIA. THE EXISTENCE OF ONLY ONE GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED NEWSPAPER AND ONE GOVERNMENT RADIO STATION IS INDICATIVE OF THE STATE OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RATHER THAN OF AN EFFORT TO CONTROL THE MEDIA. FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS CIRCULATE FREELY AND ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL WITHOUT ANY GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS, EVEN WHEN ARTICLES CONTAIN INFORMATION OR COMMENTARY CRITICAL OF

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

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THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT.

II. U.S. INTERESTS AND POLICIES

A. POLITICAL:

THE US GOVERNMENT IS INTERESTED IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF MAURITANIA WHICH WILL ENABLE THE COUNTRY TO PROVIDE FOR THE BASIC HUMAN NEEDS OF ITS PEOPLE AND ENCOURAGE A BASIS FOR POLITICAL STABILITY ALTHOUGH PERHAPS BY DEFAULT AS A RESULT OF ALGERIAN BELLIGERENCY, MAURITANIA HAS MOVED INTO THE MODERATE CAMP OF THE THIRD WORLD. WHEREAS IN THE EARLY 1970S MAURITANIA

WAS AMONG THE CO-SPONSORS OF MANY RESOLUTIONS WHICH WERE OPPOSED TO US GOVERNMENT POSITIONS, SUCH AS THE NORTH KOREAN RESOLUTION IN THE UN, THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT HAS MOVED TO A MORE MODERATE POSITION. THE US GOVERNMENT IS INTERESTED IN ENCOURAGING THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE ITS MODERATE STANCE ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES.

B. SECURITY:

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IN AND OF ITSELF MAURITANIA IS NOT IMPORTANT TO THE USG STRATEGICALLY OR IN TERMS OF ANY OTHER GEO-POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS. IT IS HOWEVER ONE OF A NUMBER OF WEST AFRICAN NATIONS THAT BELIEVE THAT THE SSOVIET UNION HAS A GRAND DESIGN TO ESTABLISH A PREDOMINANT INFLUENCE IN THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA. IT SEES ITS SOVEREIGNTY AND THAT OF SOME OF ITS NEIGHBORS DIRECTLY THREATENED BY ALGERIAN-BACKED POLISARIO AGGRESSION. IF THESE ASSUMPTIONS ARE CORRECT, AND GOVERNMENTS DO INDEED TOPPLE OR SUCCUMB TO LEFTIST PRESSURES, THE RESULTING DESTABILIZATION COULD PROVE TO BE TROUBLESONE TO THE US AND ITS WESTERN ALLIES BECAUSE IT COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT ACCESS TO BASIC COMMODITIES. ADDITIONALLY RADICALLY ORIENTED GOVERNMENTS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD COULD BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF OPPOSITION TO USG INTERESTS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ESPECIALLY THE UN AND ITS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES.

C. ECONOMIC:

ALTHOUGH THERE IS VERY LIMITED TRADE BETWEEN THE US AND MAURITANIA, US COMPANIES HAVE SUPPLIED LARGE AMOUNTS OF EQUIPMENT FOR THE MAURITANIAN IRON ORE OPERATIONS. US EXPORTS TO MAURITANIA IN 1976 WERE OVER \$17 MILLION. THERE IS LARGE POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED SALES IN MINING AND HEAVY INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT. THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT HAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED A NEW POLICY OF ENCOURAGING GREATER PRIVATE PARTICIPATION. THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO US INVESTMENT IN MAURITANIA. ONE US FIRM HAS A MAINTENANCE CONTRACT WITH THE NATIONAL AIR LINE AND ANOTHER COMPANY HAS A CONTRACT TO CONSTRUCT A SUGAR REFINERY.

III. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

A. U.S. BILATERAL 1977, 78, 1979

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U.S. ASSISTANCE TO MAURITANIA (\$000'S) 2/

	FY 1977	FY 1978	FY 1979	
DISASTER (NON FOOD)	\$ -	\$3,280	1/	\$?
DEVELOPMENT	3,346	8,000EST	11,000	
PL-480	-	1,814	?	
SSA I	-	-	-	
TOTAL	3,346	\$13,094		?

1/ CATTLE FEED AND TRANSPORTATION TO BE PROVIDED MOSTLY THROUGH FAO/OSRO.

2/ THOSE FIGURES ARE ESTIMATES ONLY. THE USG HAS ALSO SUPPLIED CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES TO MAURITANIA THROUGH IT PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WHICH ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THESE FIGURES.

III. B&C

MAURITANIA BENEFITS FROM CONSIDERABLE DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT IN THE FORM OF SOFT LOANS AND GRANTS FROM DONORS OTHER THAT THE UNITED STATES. THE PRINCIPAL DONORS INCLUDE THE ARAB OPEC COUNTRIES (ABOUT 2/3 OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE), FRANCE, CHINA (PRC), FEDERAL RUPUBLIC OF GERMANY, EED(FED), AND THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (UNDP). TOTAL LOANS AND GRANTS TO THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT FROM ARAB DONORS HAS BEEN ESTIMATED AT OVER \$200 MILLION DURING THE PAST 2 YEARS. IN ADDITION, A CONSORIUM OF MAINLY ARAB COUNTRIES AGREED TO FINANCE \$360 MILLION OF THE \$500 MILLION DEVELOPMENT OF AN EXPANDED IRON ORE EXTRACTION CAPABILITY. THE WORLD BANK HAS ALSO BEEN AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN MAURITANIAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE IBRD, AND IDA AND IFC IN A SERIES OF 11 OPERATIONS. THEY HAVE MADE SEVERAL LOANS TO THE MINING COMPANIES (\$66 MILLION) AT COMMERCIAL RATES AND TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR (\$35 MILIION) AT CONCESSIONARY RATES. FOUR OF THESE OPERATIONS ARE IN THE TRANS-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PORATION SECTOR, THREE IN THE RURAL SECTOR, ONE IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR, AND ONE IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF U.S. ASSISTANCE

A & B

PRIOR TO FY 1975, U.S. ASSISTANCE TO MAURITANIA WAS LIMITED TO OCCASIONAL EMERGENCY FOOD AND MEDICINE DOMMPCPYAJ TO CERTAIN REGIONAL ACTIVITIES SUCH AS THE SMALLPOX/MEASLES PROGRAM AND REGIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS (AFPAU AND AFGRAD). FROM INDEPENDENCE IN 1960 THROUGH FY 1974 DIRECT BILATERAL ASSISTANCE

AMOUNTED TO APPROXIMATELY \$27,000,000) IN 1975 AID NEGOTIATED
THE SAHEL DROUGHT RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM (\$2.915 MILLION
)

TO HELP THE COUNTRY REESTABLISH A CERTAIN STABILITY IN RURAL
AREAS WHICH HAD BEEN DEVASTATED BY THE 1968 TO 1974 DROUGHT.
AS THIS TWO YEAR PROGRAM WAS PHASING DOWN, PLANNING WAS BEING
UNDERTAKEN BY THE INTERSTATE COMMITTEE TO FIGHT DROUGHT
IN THE SAHEL (CILSS) AND THE CLUB DES AMIS DU SAHEL TO MOUNT
A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR THE ENTIRE SAHEL. AS ENVISIONED
BY SAHELIAN NATIVPD AND FULLY SUPPORTED BY THE USG THROUGH A
SPECIAL CONGRESSIONAL APPROPRIATION, THIS PLAN COMMITTED
SAHELIAN COUNTRIES AND THEIR TRADITIONAL ASSISTANCE DONORS TO
A 20 YEAR, 2 BILLION DOLLAR EFFORT TO ESTABLISH FOOD SELF-
SUFFICIENCY IN THE REGIONS PARALLEL EFFORTS WILL BE UNDERTAKEN
BY ALL THE COUNTRIES TO SURMOUNT COMMON "CORE" PROBLEMS, E.G.,
ECOLOGICAL DETERIORATION, INADEQUATE HEALTH DELIVERY SYSTEMS,
UNDER-UTILIZATION OF IRRIGATED AGRICULTUREPOTENTIAL, INEFFICIENT
AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS, ETC. THE U.S. IS A PRIMARY SUPPORTER OF
THIS SCHEME THROUGH THE SAHEL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (\$90 MILLION
REQUEST PRESENTED TO CONGRESS FOR THE FY 1979 PROGRAM).

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THE AID AFFAIRS OFFICE IN NOUAKCHOTT IS CURRENTLY PLANNING A SERIES
OF 9 BILATERAL PROJECTS DESIGNED TO MAKE THE TRANSITION
FROM AN ESSENTIALLY DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAM TO THE MAJOR DEVELOP-
MENTACTIVITIES ENVISIONED UNDER THE SAHEL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.
THROUGH THESE LARGEY EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS IN AGRICULTURE?*
HEALTH, EDUCATION, EXOLOGY, RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, RURAL EMPLOY-
MENT GENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING, AID HOPES OVER THE
NEXT FIVE YEARS TO GENERATE SUFFICIENT DATA ABOUT THE SOCIOLO-
GICAL AND TECHNICAL APPROPRIATENESS OF ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT
APPROACHES THAT IT CAN THEN PROCEED WITH CONFIDENCE IN MAKING
THE MAJOR INVESTMENT COMMITMENTS CALLED FOR IN THE SAHEL
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

C. SA- CURRENT OBJECTIVES:

NONE
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